

PASTOR'S CORNER

Advent: Second Coming and the Myth of Progress

CCC #675: Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.

Only in time are we moving toward the second coming of Jesus Christ in glory. We are not progressing in maturity towards this event in any way (as though somehow today we are better or wiser people than we were 2,000 years ago). The second coming is not at all "evolutionary" in the same sense that the biological or physical unfolding of material existence is said to be. In fact, as the excerpt from the Catechism above indicates, the second coming is anything but. In other words, the universe does not unfold in order to someday become worthy of receiving the fullness of God's mercy in Christ. Christ will come only when it is clear that the maximum number of souls have been saved and that his coming is necessary in order to prevent the full ruin of the faithful.

Many current theologians, including the late Pope St. John Paul II, believe that it is indeed possible that we are beginning to see the seeds sown for the coming of the Antichrist. Notice how the Catechism defines this term above: not necessarily as an individual person per se, but 'a pseudo-messianism' (or system of belief or ideology) 'by which man glorifies himself in place of God.' This messianism will take the form of a 'religious deception.'

There have, of course, been many such systems in the recent past; think of communism, fascism, consumerism, Nazism and so on. Each of these, though denying true religion, conducted itself not unlike many human religions with supreme infallible leaders (or forces) and rites of initiation and practice. In this sense, as St. John makes clear, there are always any number of candidates (either persons, movements or institutions) that can qualify as 'antichrists.' The second coming, however, is ushered in by the Antichrist, not one of many. This person or ideology will therefore be of such scope and power as to deceive the entire world and perhaps even infiltrate parts of the Church herself, placing many of the faithful at risk of apostasy. Such a possibility didn't really exist until the modern age when mass-communication made it possible for almost any belief or 'new age idea' to 'go viral' and spread quickly around the globe.

The advent of the Antichrist precedes the second coming. Scripture assigns the deliberately ambiguous duration of '7 years' to this period, but most Biblical scholars do not see this as a literal period of time as much as a period of ending, primarily symbolic or even mystical. Whatever the length of time, it will no doubt seem like an eternity for any living through it; at least for those who cling to their faith. Those who refuse to embrace the new 'world religion' will be persecuted to a far greater degree than has ever been the case. Most casual members of the Church will find ample reason to bolt for greener pastures. Some of this is always evident when the Church's message becomes increasingly counter-cultural. Many people want to use faith for their own purposes and when observance begins to cost them too much, they either try to conform the faith to their own needs or abandon it altogether.

The second coming of Christ brings about an immediate end to history. Catholics do not believe that Jesus' reign on earth will follow the times of tribulation; rather we believe that Christ has already established his earthly reign through his Church and that the second coming will perfect this reign in the eternity of heaven. Time and space will cease to exist as realities tied to change, but will instantly be transformed by Jesus' appearance. The dead will be raised and judged, with the righteous being reunited with their now glorified bodies and the condemned sent off packing to hell (a state of eternal separation from God).

If we should die before the second coming, we are judged immediately and our soul is either adhered to Christ, awaiting the resurrection of the body, or exists in a state of isolation from God called hell. Death therefore does not bring about the second coming, but it does reveal to us our ultimate disposition. If in heaven with Jesus, our prayers assist those still on earth or in Purgatory (a place or state of purification and transition). At the second coming, this heaven of the saints is extended to include all of creation; a creation that through God's intervention in Christ, now becomes perfected and completed in Him. In truth, this is the 'coming of the Lord' towards which we currently look. As we approach the celebration of Christmas, though our gaze always remains on the distant horizon, we inwardly turn back to commemorate that great event of the incarnation and Nativity that ushered in the current and final age wherein all creation tends towards its glorification and perfection in the Lord. In the second coming is the first fulfilled and glorified and are its benefits and graces therefore extended to the entirety of creation.

Fr. Stephen Geer

Advent

Day	Date	Time	Observance	Mass Intention
VIGIL	Dec 2	5:00 pm	Vigil of the Sunday Eucharist (Blessing of the Advent Wreath)	Joanna Kong +
SUNDAY	Dec 3	9:00 am	First Sunday of Advent (The Holy Rosary will be prayed in the chapel at 8:30 am)	Henry Chieu Nguyen +
		11:30 am	First Sunday of Advent	Missa pro populo
Monday	Dec 4		No service	
Tuesday	Dec 5	8:30 am	Advent weekday	August Duncan +
Wednesday	Dec 6	8:30 am	Advent weekday	Helen & Don Erspamer +
Thursday	Dec 7	8:30 am	St. Ambrose, Bishop & Doctor of the Church	Priest's intention
			<u>Readings for the Immaculate Conception:</u> Genesis 3.9-15, 20; Psalm 98; Ephesians 1.3-6, 11-12; Luke 1.26-38	
Friday	Dec 8	9:00 am	The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Missa pro populo
Saturday	Dec 9	8:30 am	Advent weekday (The Holy Rosary will be prayed in the Church at 8:00 am)	Millie Susnjara +
			<u>Readings for the Sunday Mass:</u> Isaiah 40.1-5, 9-11; Psalm 85; 2 Peter 3.8-14; Mark 1.1-8	
VIGIL		5:00 pm	Vigil of the Sunday Eucharist	Joanna Kong +
SUNDAY	Dec 10	9:00 am	Second Sunday of Advent (The Holy Rosary will be prayed in the chapel at 8:30 am)	Doris Miller +
		11:30 am	Second Sunday of Advent	Missa pro populo
		2:00 pm	Second Sunday of Advent	Fr. Dominic Mtenga